Categorical Exclusion Review

Project Information

Proposal Name: McGuire Creek Suction Dredge

Proposal Date: 11/1/2020

Project Contact: Martin Jones

Responsible Official: Terry Nevius**,** Red River District Ranger

Unit: Nez Perce - Clearwater National Forests

Ranger District: Red River

Counties: Idaho

State: Idaho

Anticipated Implementation: Summer 2021 and 2022, less than one year in total to complete.

Signing Authority: District Ranger

Public web link: http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/nepa_project_exp.php?project=59240

General Location: The project area lies within the riparian area of McGuire Creek (tributary to Big Creek), about one mile west of the junction of Big Creek and McGuire Creek and the FS 311 Road

Applicable Management Areas: 12

Legal Description: T26N, R7E, Sections 23, 24 Boise Meridian

Elevation Range: 6,160-6,240

Watersheds: Crooked Creek, Salmon River

Applicable Categories

This proposal is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement because it fits the following category or categories, pending extraordinary circumstance determinations:

Applicable Category or Categories:

36 CFR 220.6(e)(8) (DM Required)

This category is / categories are applicable for this project because this project proposes short term mineral exploration through trenching to obtain evidence of mineralization, and incidental activities including the use of existing roads and trails, and camping.

Proposed Action

The proposal is to conduct suction dredging/placer exploration in McGuire Creek.

The project area is accessed by taking Forest Service Road (FSR) 222 from the Red River Ranger Station to the Dixie Work Center, then on FSR 311 to the mouth of McGuire Creek. From there, a serviceable trail follows McGuire Creek from FSR 311 at the confluence of Big Creek and McGuire Creek to the project area.

- The project area starts approximately one (1) mile from the mouth of McGuire Creek and
- continues upstream from that point.
- Testing in McGuire Creek would be limited to a total of 300 feet of exploration (down to bedrock, estimated to be 4 - 6 feet) within the 2,000-foot reach delineated on the map. Exploration would be completed using a four (4) inch suction dredge. Exploration would be limited to one year.
- Oversized material would be moved by hand and stacked to the side of the excavation.
- As dredging progressed, test holes would be backfilled with dredged material and previously hand stacked oversized material.
- Dredged material would be passed over a sluice box, which is an integral part of the floating dredge.
- Waste gravel would be discharged from the sluice box back into the stream.
- The sluice box would be cleaned out at the end of each day and the "concentrate" panned to recover gold values.
- A stream channel alteration permit would be required from the Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) prior to implementing the project.
- A National Point Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit would be required from the Environmental Protection Agency or Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ) prior to
- implementing the project.

Reclamation of dredged holes would be done concurrently.

- As sampling for each dredge hole is completed, the hole would be backfilled with cobble and boulders previously removed and stockpiled during dredging operations.
- When possible, the dredge would be oriented to backfill the holes with tailings as dredging progressed.

A tent would be erected along FSR 311 near the project site (see Map).

- Up to three workers would be camping onsite at any one time.
- A portable toilet would be onsite, and all waste materials will be removed from the forest and disposed of.
- Any fuel kept onsite will be contained according to Best Management Practices.

Equipment to be used includes:

- A four (4) inch suction dredge,
- Hand tools such as picks, shovels, gold pans, and a small sluice box,
- One - two UTVs or ATVs for resupplying the camp.

A reclamation bond appropriate to the operation would be calculated by the Forest Service.

- A bond sufficient to cover all needed reclamation would be submitted by the operator before the Plan of Operation was approved and before work could begin.

Requisites for exploration proposals of this type include:

- Idaho Best Management Practices for Mining (Idaho Department of Lands, et al. 1992) would be followed.
- National Core BMPs Volume 1 (USDA FS-990A, April 2012) would be followed.
- Terms and conditions of IDWR /US Army Corps of Engineers Stream Alteration Permit (3804B) are incorporated by reference.
- Standard requirements appropriate to suction dredging are incorporated into this project (see below).

- A standard set of general requirements have been developed for exploration proposals.
    - Many of these requirements are not applicable to suction dredging operations.
    - All requirements relevant to this proposal will be adhered to.
    - A field review with the operator would be necessary before the project is initiated to identify locations for implementation of site-specific mitigation measures.
    - A reclamation bond appropriate to the operation would be calculated by the Forest Service.
- A bond sufficient to cover all needed reclamation would be submitted by the operator before the Plan of Operation is approved and before work may begin.

Idaho Best Management Practices for Mining would be followed. A standard set of general requirements has been developed for exploration proposals of this type.

- Not all listed requirements are relevant to this proposed action.
- All requirements relevant to this proposal will be adhered to.
- A field review with the operator would be necessary before the project is initiated to identify locations for implementation of site-specific mitigation measures.

General Requirements

1. Notify District Ranger or minerals administrator at least 48 hours before any work is to begin.
2. Wash all vehicles and equipment used at the site before being brought onto National Forest system lands to prevent the spread of noxious weeds, seeds or propagules.
3. Avoid disturbance of wetlands and stream riparian zones.
4. Avoid working on saturated soils. Exploration activities must cease to avoid sedimentation into intermittent streams if excessive storm water or ground water runoff is occurring.
5. Prevent discharge of water into any live stream or wetland. To avoid erosion and discharge impact to streams, all activities (including drilling, construction of pads, hand-dug sumps, and any overland travel) will be kept at least 164 feet (50 m) from flowing water that is down gradient.
6. Place weed free straw bales or install silt fence in places as identified by a Forest Service representative to minimize sediment migration from stockpiles and disturbed ground.
7. Obtain prior approval from the Forest Service for cutting or removal of trees or other large live vegetation. Downfall may be removed as needed.
8. Set aside cleared slash and green vegetation (e.g., bear grass) during test pit construction. Remove vegetation in clumps, if possible, with the soil mass intact. Store excavated topsoil and subsoil in separate stockpiles to be used during reclamation. Temporarily replant vegetation clumps in the topsoil stockpile.
9. Maintain only one (1) active pit or trench open at any one time. Reclamation may be occurring at one (1) other pit or trench concurrently.
10. To help alleviate the need for field crew to decide if fish are present in water withdrawal locations, a 3/32 inch screen will be installed on pump intake hoses even when utilizing a 5-gallon bucket with drilled holes. Water withdrawals will be located on small, high gradient streams as far up creek drainages as feasible to avoid habitat used by fish and sourced from streams under existing permits from the State of Idaho.
11. Collect process water in the existing pit. Regulate discharge to prevent overtopping the pit, and/or land apply excess water on a site designated by the Forest Service. Application sites will typically be natural sumps or depressions, pits or trap(s) that avoid impacts to wetlands or streams and minimizes impacts to other surface resources. Application rate will be such that overland flow is avoided and a natural infiltration occurs through forest duff.
12. Backfill and reclaim each test pit as soon as testing has been completed for that site.
13. Follow the State of Idaho Best Management Practices (BMPs) for all surface disturbing activities, reclamation, and abandonment. BMPs are outlined in the Best Management Practices for Mining in Idaho (Idaho BMPs) (Idaho Department of Lands, et al. 1992).
14. Report accidents or injuries to the Forest Service within 24 hours.
15. Develop hazardous materials and spill prevention plan and submit it to the District Ranger prior to operations.

16. Store no more than 50 gallons of fuel or oil in the project area. Store all fuel or oil in a covered secondary containment system that limits spills to the environment and is capable of 110% volume of stored products. Fuel must be stored 328 feet (100m) from flowing water. Spills kits must be located at all refueling or fuel transfer locations.
17. Remove all equipment, garbage and trash resulting from the operation from National Forest system lands prior to October 1, the end of the regular operating season. Dispose garbage and trash at a State of Idaho approved site.
18. Use and maintain a sanitary facility (e.g., porta-potty or self-contained camper) at the project area while operations are ongoing.
19. Comply with all applicable Federal and State fire laws and regulations and take all reasonable measures to prevent and suppress fires on the area of operations and require employees, contractors and subcontractors to do likewise (36 CFR 228.11).
20. If any previously undiscovered threatened, endangered, proposed, or sensitive species are encountered at any point in time prior to or during the implementation of this project, a Forest Service District Biologist will be consulted, and appropriate measures will be enacted.
21. If accidental take occurs from any previously undiscovered threatened, endangered, proposed, or sensitive species, all work must cease, and a Forest Service District biologist notified.
22. Human food and garbage will be stored in an enclosed and secure area to avoid conflict with wildlife.

Reclamation:

1. Restoring subsoil and topsoil to existing natural ground contour.
2. Replanting beargrass clumps or other vegetation in topsoil.
3. Placing locally available slash and duff over topsoil and around beargrass clumps or other replanted vegetation.
4. Seeding and mulching disturbed areas with appropriate seed mix and certified weed free straw.
5. Refill the test pits and trenches in the reverse order overburden was removed.
6. Perform reclamation concurrently with the operation. Test pits, trenches and associated trails will be reclaimed as soon as practicable when testing is completed at a site.

Reclamation Bond and Water Right:

1. A reclamation bond must be received for this proposal by the Forest Service before work can begin. Bond amount will be calculated by the minerals administrator in an amount sufficient to cover the costs to reclaim the site to pre-project condition.
2. Obtain any necessary permits prior to approval of the Plan of Operations.
3. Seasonal closeout and reclamation must be completed no later than October 1 to ensure all equipment is removed from the site and reclamation is complete before winter weather sets in.
4. Once the Forest Service receives the bond, the Plan of Operations may be approved.

This project includes design elements to protect water quality. These are not all-inclusive, as Forest Plan standards are incorporated by reference (USDA Forest Service 1987, as amended).

1. Where water is used to process mineral samples onsite using sump or settling ponds, place silt fences or other suitable erosion control devices between the pond and live waters (including streams, creeks, and wetlands) such that sediment laden water is not delivered directly to these waters. Process water should infiltrate naturally and be allowed to flow through forest duff.
2. Do not locate excavation pits and spoils piles (temporary or permanent) within any existing wetland.
3. Replant all disturbed soils as soon as possible to minimize soil erosion.
4. Do not remove dead, dying or downed coarse woody debris from any RHCA.
5. Where feasible, incorporate the existing woody debris and vegetation located onsite into the soil to maintain organic matter content and long-term soil productivity.
6. Do not construct structures (sheds, shelters, etc.) in any wetland or floodplain within the project area.
7. If existing native surface roads are used for access, reconstruct water bars on the native surface project roads prior to the end of the operating season. Follow guidelines and typical drawings, as specified.

8. Do not remove, disturb, or damage any in-stream fish habitat structure; e.g., log jam, rock cluster, etc. If necessary, for prudent or safe operations to do so, notify the Forest such that the District or Forest fisheries biologist may inspect the proposed changes to fish habitat.
9. Where necessary to maintain sanitation facilities on-site, do not locate facilities closer than 50 feet to any lake, stream, river or wetland; and have spill prevention control and countermeasures so effluent from the facility does not reach any lake, stream, river or wetland.
10. If the total oil or oil products storage at a work site is to exceed 1,320 gallons or if a single container; e.g., fuel truck or trailer, exceeds a capacity of 660 gallons, the purchaser shall prepare and implement a Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasures (SPCC) Plan. The SPCC plan will meet applicable EPA requirements (40 CFR 112), including certification by a registered professional engineer. (SFP: FW-119, 120, 122).

Requirements for Suction Dredging

1. Practice concurrent reclamation as dredging progresses; i.e. discharge from second dredge hole should be directed refill the previous hole to minimize reclamation efforts at end of season.
2. Complete reclamation and remove all dredging equipment by end of the fish window set by the Forest Service Fisheries Biologist.
3. Suction dredging operations would occur within the wetted perimeter below the ordinary high-water line during an IDWR dredging seasons.
4. Dredging, operational discharge, or other activities must be conducted in a manner to prevent undercutting or destabilization of stream banks and stable woody debris or boulders.
5. Do not displace or remove dead, dying or downed coarse woody debris from any RHCA.
6. Do not remove, disturb or damage any in-stream fish habitat structure; e.g., log jam, rock cluster, etc. If necessary, for prudent or safe operations to do so, notify the Forest such that the District or Forest fisheries biologist may inspect the proposed changes to fish habitat.
7. Restoring as much material to the dredge hole as possible to armor the stream bed from potential scouring.
8. Cobbles and small boulders moved from their initial location would be repositioned near its approximate location, configuration, height, etc. to avoid long term changes to the channel flow characteristics.
9. Knock down and distribute remnant tailings piles from operational discharge below the waterline by or before the end of the fish passage window set by the Fisheries Biologist.
10. Restore areas of human created disturbances (trails, camping areas or staging areas) by placing slash or debris and reseeding if necessary.

Design Elements

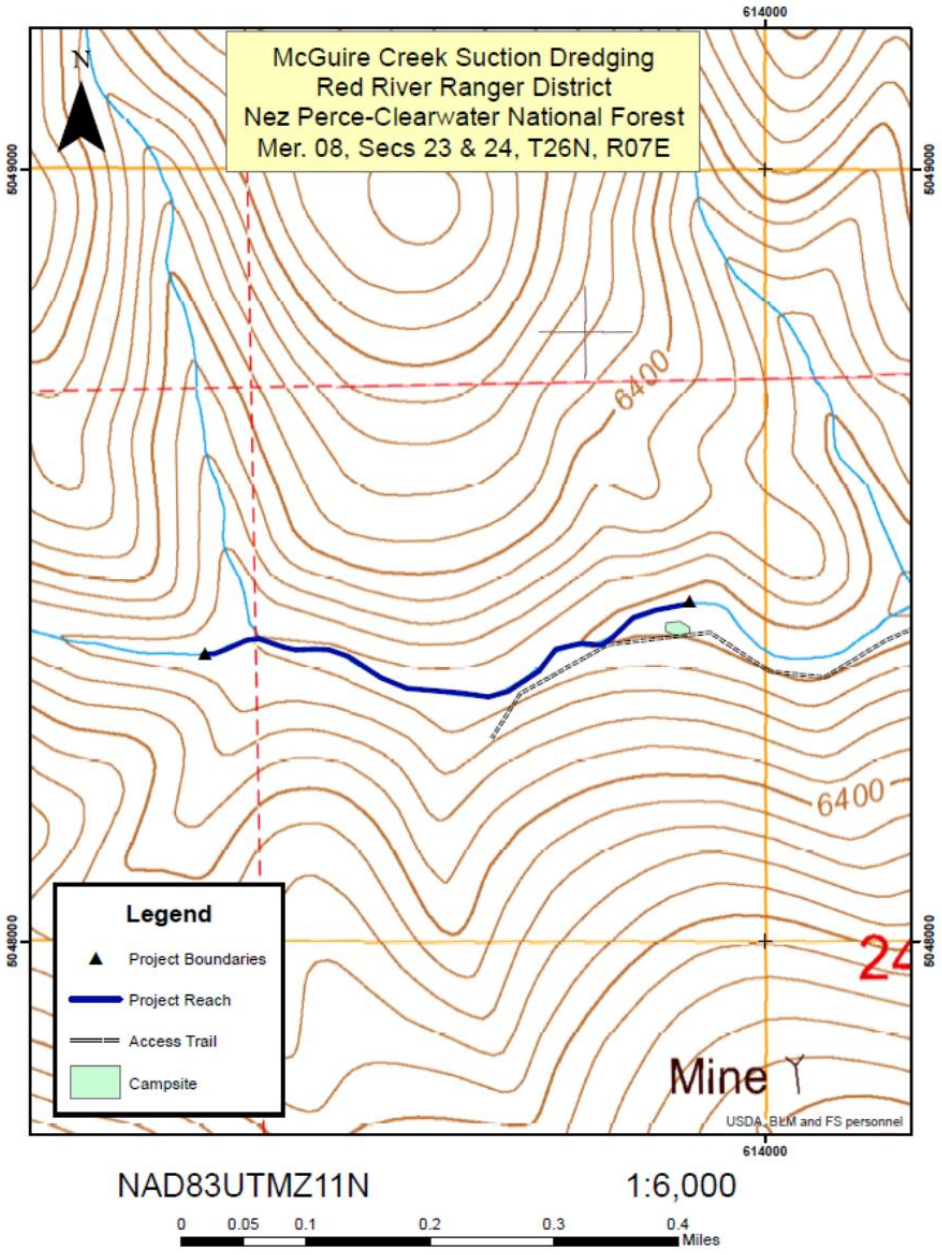
The following design elements are incorporated into the proposed action to ensure land management plan compliance:

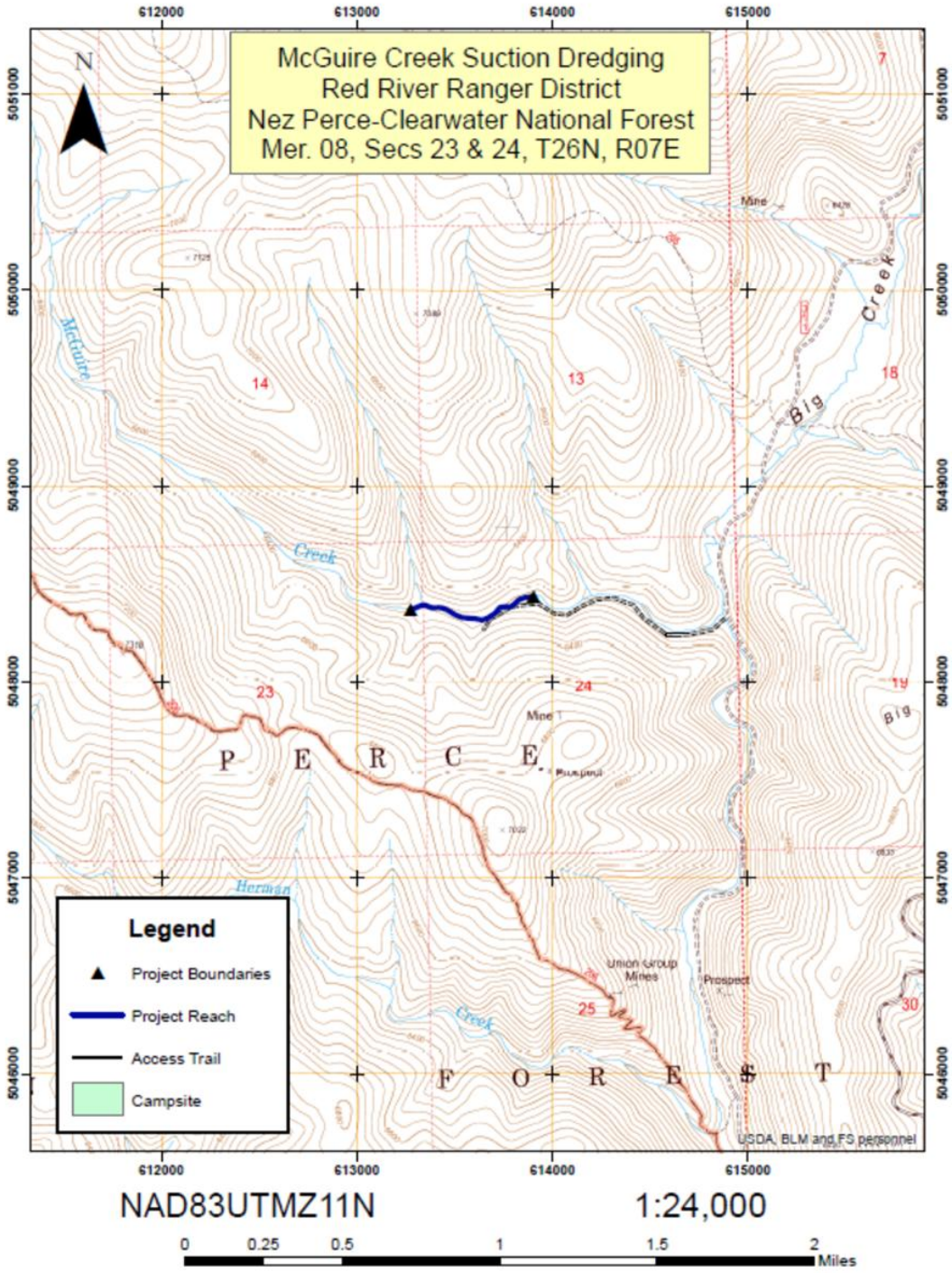
Table 1. Design elements

Design Element Label	Design Element Description	Plan Component
A-1	Known historic (NRHP Eligible/historically significant) properties or sites will be avoided or protected during project implementation. ***NP/CLW Forest Plan Standard***	Archaeology

Design Element Label	Design Element Description	Plan Component
A-2	Ground-disturbing activities would be halted if cultural resources are discovered until an Archaeologist can properly evaluate and document the resources in compliance with 36 CFR 800.	Archaeology

Project Maps




McGuire Creek Suction Dredging
Red River Ranger District
Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest
Mer. 08, Secs 23 & 24, T26N, R07E
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Prospect
Union Group Mines
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P E R C E
F O R E S T
Legend
Project Boundaries
Project Reach
Access Trail
Campsite
USDA, BLM and FS personnel
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